

HAVING had the better of the first half of Tuesday night's Rothmans Isthmian League encounter at Hendon, Wycombe Wanderers were caught cold by two goals early in the second spell and were never able to recover. This was the second league defeat of the season.

This result may not come as such a great shock to onlookers. After all, Hendon are the only unbeaten side in Division One and were generally regarded as Wycombe's toughest test to date. But it was the way it came that surprised most of us. Wanderers were well on top in the first half and had everything to look forward to after the break. As it transpired, they hardly knew what hit them.

It is difficult to pin-point the cause of this defeat. It may well have been in midfield, where Wycombe lost their earlier supremacy. The front runners too, hardly got a look in during the second half and the defence, so sound in the first half, looked eminently shaky in the second.

I wonder just what would have happened if Wycombe had put away one or two of the chances they created during that first half. There's no doubt they were desperately unlucky at times, but the breakthrough just wouldn't come. The significance of that didn't materialise until the second half when

By STUART EARP Hendon 2, Wycombe Wanderers 0

Rod Haider scored a brilliant individual goal and then Bobby Childs added a second 12 minutes later. It could have been even worse as Hendon went mighty close to becoming the first side to take a £40 bonus from the Blues.

At first, though, things looked rosy for Wycombe. Tony Horseman went close after seven minutes then Brian Stevens almost back-headed into his own net from Howard Kennedy's long throw. Hendon did not let Wycombe have things all their own way and looked dangerous on the break. Their fast running front three of Tony Amos, John Baker and Childs were always a threat but in the early stages they were deprived of service from midfield, thanks to Terry Reardon

and Mick Holifield, who both worked like trojans.

It took Hendon 24 minutes to test Blues' keeper John Maskell when former professional Dave Metchick volleyed from 20 yards but John tipped the ball around the post for a corner. Goals, however, looked more likely to come at the other end where Mal Dalrymple had an unhappy time. The goalkeeper's punching of the ball was always suspect and his goalkicks put his defenders under pressure many times.

APPEALS

Wycombe's closest effort came after 28 minutes. Horseman curled a corner into the six yard box and Derek Harris headed for goal with Dalrymple stranded. There were

several appeals that the ball had crossed the line but the referee waved play on with his linesman well positioned.

For the rest of the first half Wanderers kept play pinned inside Hendon's half without creating anything clear cut. They looked to be lacking aggression up front but nonetheless, were generally the superior side on the first 45 minutes.

Five minutes after the interval the Blues were rudely awakened by Hendon's first goal. It came from the vastly experienced midfield-player Haider, who has over 80 England amateur caps to his name — a record. And the goal he scored must rank as one of the best of his illustrious career. Reardon was unlucky to see the ball squirt out to Haider following his tackle. Paul

Birdseye went into challenge but Haider kept possession, sold a dummy and then placed a left foot shot past Maskell's outstretched left hand into the far corner.

It was the signal for Hendon to throw off all their first half shackles. Their confidence grew with every move, long raking passes to either flank stretching Wycombe's defence continually.

Wanderers just couldn't find an answer to it all. They were often second to the ball and lost all their bite in midfield where Metchick began to dominate. Former Wanderer Amos forced Maskell to save an awkward shot after 54 minutes and then with 62 minutes gone, Hendon scored the killer second goal. Alan Field worked his way down the right wing and crossed into the box. The ball bounced up near the six yard line and for one fatal moment, Birdseye and Delaney hesitated. They hesitated long enough to allow Childs to nip in and stab a header past Maskell.

The pressure continued. Metchick sent a far post cross to Baker two minutes later and only Maskell's save which deflected the ball onto the cross bar, prevented Wanderers going three down.

At this stage, Wycombe were being beaten at their own game. It was the speed and accuracy of the Hendon moves that caught them out and it took some time for them to recover. By then, the damage was done and they never looked like pulling back twice to share the spoils.

There were chances, however. Horseman volleyed over the top and Keith Mead sent a diving header into the side netting from Birdseye's astute cross in the 73rd minute. But Hendon also had other moments in attack and the Wycombe defence, their confidence broken, were never able to restore the authority they won in the first half.

It was Hendon who came closest to scoring in the last few minutes, from one glorious move. Long, flowing passes again penetrated Wycombe's rearguard and Childs hit the side netting to finish off the attack with the linesman's flag up for offside.

Two of the happiest men after the match were Alan Phillips and Gary Hand. These two fine players left Wycombe during the close season and have played a large part in Hendon's resurgence this year.

HENDON: M. Dalrymple; J. Field, B. Stevens, A. Phillips, G. Hand; R. Haider D. Metchick, A. Field; R. Childs, J. Baker A. Amos, Sub E. James (not used).

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye K. Mead, J. Delaney, R. Eaton; H. Kennedy (sub G. Mackenzie 62 mins), T. Reardon, M. Holifield; A. Horseman, D. Harris, D. Evans.

Referee: B. Robinson (Ashford).
Half time: 0-0. **Goalscorers**
Hendon — Haider (50), Childs (62).